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January 24, 2022

Senator William C. Smith, Jr. Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 17 - SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, asks the **Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to amend and favorably report on Senate Bill 17.**

The Maryland Psychological Association strongly supports the intent of intent of SB 17 to providing training to the Judiciary about the impact of domestic violence and trauma on victims and children. In fact, members of the Maryland Psychological Association along with attorneys from the House of Ruth provided a seminar in the fall 2021 to judges and magistrates on these issues. We believe that ongoing training of the judiciary is critical.

SB 17 as currently written, however, specifies a narrow training curriculum with identified topics, some of which reflect current understanding, and others which involve current controversies in child abuse and domestic violence. The topics specified in the bill may, or may not, prove to be relevant in the future. Therefore, the Maryland Psychological Association urges the committee to **amend SB 17 by striking all language following line 3 on page 2.** This change would allow the Judiciary, in consultation with domestic violence and child abuse organizations, to develop a training program that is flexible, relevant, and addresses the needs of Maryland's families. Further, we ask that the Judiciary set educational requirements for judges who are involved in family law cases and that only Judges who have received this training are able to preside over these very complicated family matters.

Please feel free to contact MPA's Executive Director Stefanie Reeves at exec@marylandpsychology.org if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Linda McGhee

R. Patrick Savage, Jr.

Linda McGhee, Psy.D., JD
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs